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PEACE- AT ANY PRICE



PORTER EMERSON BROWNE



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Peace—at Any Price



“The Great Pacifist . . . begins to sing himself to sleep”

[PAGE 20]

✓ Peace— at Any Price

By
Porter Emerson Browne



Illustrations by
Peter Newell ✓

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I SAW him the morning after. He had a cut lip, the knuckles of his right hand were swollen, and his left eye was the color of an apple that has lain too long.

“Well, what in the world happened to you?” I demanded; for, since he was one of the most peaceable chaps I had ever known, and had long since attained years of discretion, to say that I was surprised would be putting it very mildly. “Where were you last night, anyway?”

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He gently stroked the knuckles of his right hand.

“At the peace meeting,” he returned.

“Peace meeting!” I exclaimed.

“At first,” he answered. “Then I was around at the police station for a while.”

“But, good heavens!” I cried. “They didn’t do all that to you at a peace meeting!”

He smiled. It wasn’t a very good smile, owing to the condition of eye and lip; but it held beneath it much.

“If you think I’m bad,” he said, “you ought to see the rest of ’em.”

“But a peace meeting! With the Great Pacifist present!” I began.

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“You ought to see him in particular. He looks like Seventh Avenue looked just after the subway caved in.”

I was frankly and amazedly incomprehensive. I knew well of the meeting of which he spoke, as who did not? It had been a great gathering of those in favor of Peace at any Price. It had been held in the greatest convention hall of America's greatest city. And greater than all, there had been present none other than the Great Pacifist Himself! And now came one who had been there, bearing a Van Dyke orb and a lacerated lip, to say nothing of sundry swollen knuckles!

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“Didn’t you see today’s papers?” he asked, anticipating my flow of questions.

“Why, no,” I said.

“It’s got everything backed off the front page except the weather and the date.” He smiled again. “It was certainly the most surprising peace meeting I ever saw; and,” he added, tentatively fingering his maroon optic, “the busiest. It hadn’t been going an hour before the dove of peace in his excitement swallowed the olive branch, and I’ll bet eight million candareens, which is forty cents in our money, that he hasn’t lit since.”

“Tell me about it,” I urged.

And he did.

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I was sort of poking around last night, with nothing on my mind but my hat, and nowhere to go but out—you know the kind of an evening I mean—where you've seen all the shows and they're bad, and you don't want to go to your clubs because somebody's sure to want you to do something you don't want to, and you don't think much of your married friends because they have wives, and of your single ones because they haven't, and the weather's too pleasant to stay indoors and yet not pleasant enough to stay out, and you can't think of anything you'd like to eat or drink, or anywhere you want to go— Well, that's the way I was.

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So I walked up the street, and turned to the left, and walked back again, and sat down, and got up again, and walked some more.

Finally I turned into Seventh Avenue. And happening to look ahead, I saw halfway down the block a flock of sea-going automobiles and a crowd of people all going into a large building that looked like a cross between a union station and a storage warehouse—that is, the people were going in, I mean, not the automobiles.

“Hello,” I says to myself, “what’s all this to-do?”

Not having anything better to do, I walks down the block to see. And,

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arriving at the premises, I finds out that, as I've begun to suspect, it's the great peace meeting, where those in favor of Peace at any Price had foregathered from all over the country to express at length their absence of views regarding the subject.

As you know, the papers had been advertising it for days, the press agents working in shifts to let the public know about it. If all the editorials for and against it could have been cut out and pasted end to end, they would have reached from Kamchatka to Beluchistan and halfway back to Peapack, N. J. And the conversation that had been expended in

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arguments about it would have kept all the windmills in Holland going for three hundred and thirty-two years. And, to cap the climax, and put the finishing touches on, and paint the lily, and otherwise round out an already completely globular evening, there was to be present the Great Pacifist Himself, raven locks, silver tongue, and all, or vice versa, to explain to the listening multitudes as to how the best way to be prepared is to be entirely unready.

I stands there for a while, watching the people go in and listening to the conversation, pro and con—mostly con. And I notices that most of the pros, while long on conversa-

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tion, are short on foreheads and chins; though in the latter case, in many instances, whiskers helped a lot.

Finally the idea comes to me to ease myself in for a while and see what it looks like inside. It isn't very liable to be exciting, I know; but I feels sure it will be as funny as anything else I might do. And I figures that if I'm really out to waste time, this is the place of places to do it. So, getting between a couple of dignified-looking Peace-at-any-Pricers with silk hats, whose Mission style of architecture makes 'em look as though they'll be soft to lean against in case I'm kept waiting in the crowd, I

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begins to mobilize myself toward the portals.

Well, by and by, after being tossed about like chips in the turbulent sea of humanity, we wafts up the steps and into the hall. It's packed to the guards. I tries to squirm out from between the two Arts and Crafts gentlemen that have served me so well in keeping the paint from being scraped off; but just as I'm making it, along comes a gentlemanly usher.

"Ah!" says the gentlemanly usher in a ladylike manner. "Why, good evening!" and he bows inclusively to the two Morris chair gentlemen and me, who am more of the Heppel-

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white period. And I sees at once that he recognizes them and thinks he does me.

“Right this way,” he says, bowing, and he turns down the aisle.

“One moment, friend,” I says. “When I immersed myself between these two dignitaries,” I says, “I didn’t expect a ring-side seat at this peace orgy. I would much prefer to camp out somewhere near a fire exit in case the pacifical ratiocinations become so ineluctable that my abbreviated intellect passes ’em up and I decide to go out and have dinner with myself at the Automat restaurant. In which case——”

But the ladylike usher smiles

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blandly and unhearingly on me in a gentlemanly manner and continues to ush. He ushes me and the two Park Slope gentlemen with the mansard roofs further down the aisle. And, while I am still protesting, I am herded in a gentlemanly way up a short flight of steps, and I find myself sitting in a wooden chair, on the rostrum, gazing down upon a sea of upturned faces and overturned intellects, and in close proximity to the Great Pacifist Himself and another pitcher of ice water.

I looks at him with interest. He strikes me as being interesting but not conclusive. He wears a frock coat, detachable cuffs and an air of

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ingrowing rectitude. He's had his face put up in curl papers for two nights for the occasion.

Well, finally, the people are all seated and the clock strikes eight-thirty. Seeing it's his turn, a gentleman that looks like an undertaker, only not so optimistic, calls the meeting to order with a short speech. But as he doesn't say anything, no harm is done.

Then another man makes a speech. He doesn't say anything either. When he finishes, everybody applauds. I did myself. We were all glad it was over.

Then the chairman, or the referee, or the head dove, or whatever you

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call 'em at peace meetings, comes to the front and, with a verbal fanfare and a waving of oratorical banners, not to mention a blaring of forensic trumpets, introduces to the gathered thousands the Great Pacifist. There follows a great clapping of hands. Inasmuch as the heads of most of those present contained nothing but acoustics, the result was surprising.

Then comes a hush; it was almost two hushes. The Great Pacifist clears his throat, takes a drink of ice water, brushes back a stray curl, leans gracefully against the table, and begins to sing himself to sleep.

He says that to be prepared for war is to invite disaster. He says



“Two of the neatest back somersaults I ever saw done
by amateurs.” [See page 50.]

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that we should teach loving-kindness to the world by throwing away our muskets and turning our machine guns into sewing machines. He says that then the rest of the world will see how nice and polite and gentlemanly we are and it will make them so jealous that they won't be satisfied until they're like us, and that under our noble example the entire world will become as peacefully happy as a Sunday afternoon meeting of the Epworth League, or a kitten under a stove. He says that if a man smite you on the cheek, turn the other. He says that the nation that is too proud to fight will, by its example, raise all

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other nations to its lofty plane. He says that a shining example beats a shining sword like an ace full. He says that the idea that you should speak softly but carry a big stick is all wrong; that you should carry an olive branch and make all the noise you can; in other words, that you make such a sucker of yourself that nobody would have the heart to pick on you.

Well, sir, he goes on, and on, and on, and then on some more—and on—and still on—his dulcet tones applying an emollient to the circum-ambient ether until it gets as thick and heavy as old port wine. And I begins to think to myself that Peace

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is certainly a wonderful thing because it makes you so sleepy.

I says to myself, "Let us all have Peace and nobody'll be able to stay awake long enough to fight." Beneath the soothing drone of the Great Pacifist's vocal emanations, I begins to figure it all out sleepily in my mind. Gallant General Gazotz will receive from his superior, talking in his sleep, an order to charge. Rubbing his eyes, he will call to his men. But they'll all be asleep. When he finally gets 'em all awake, they'll have been so sleepy they'll have forgot to load their guns. And when finally they dash somnolently across the battle field and fall

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on the enemy, they'll find them asleep, too. And if they can stay awake long enough, they'll capture 'em without shedding a drop of blood. And then they'll all lie down together and go to sleep again. Yes, sir, I begin to think that Peace at any Price is certainly the cutest little idea yet.

The Great Pacifist chants on. To keep awake, I began to count sheep going over a fence; because, I thinks to myself, if I'm going to sleep when I ought to stay awake, the best way to keep myself awake is to put myself to sleep.

But finally, when it doesn't work, and I find I'm going to sleep any-

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how, I begin to sit up and look around.

Now, while, as I say, to me the Great Pacifist's speech is as dulcetly soothing as "Home, Sweet Home" played on a harpsichord with the soft pedal on, I suddenly see before me, down in the front row, a chap that it doesn't seem to appeal to in just that way.

He's a clean-cut, upstanding man of about forty, with broad shoulders, a little mustache and a wrist watch. But don't let that fool you. The wrist that the watch is on is as husky as a hickory sapling. And the hand at the end of it is lean, and brown, and muscular. He has a good head,

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with plenty of room in it to wear his brain. On the side of it is a healing wound. There is also a scar on his cheek, and another on the wrist, just above the watch.

And he is fidgeting. My, but he's fidgeting! Every time the Great Pacifist comes to the end of a verse, he hitches around in his chair; then he crosses his legs; then he uncrosses them and crosses them the other way. I can see that, in the crude phraseology of the proletariat, the words and music being emitted by the human orchestrion before him are beginning to get his goat.

But he manages to stick it out all right for two more verses and a

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chorus. But then, just as the Great Pacifist is launching into the idea that we should turn our swords into plowshares, our battleships into baseburners, abolish the Boy Scouts, and convert the coast defenses into Chautauquas, he hops to his feet.

“One moment,” he says.

He got it. He got several. He also gained the astonished attention of a hall full of people and moreover of the Great Pacifist, who comes to a full stop on an antepenultimate syllable with both rear wheels locked.

“Far be it from me,” says the Lad with the Wrist Watch, “to intrude a humble personality into so august a mobilization of the English lan-

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guage. But inasmuch as the ideas that lie ambushed within that verbal *chevaux-de-frise* look to me as though they ought to be taken out and aired, I rise to a point of disorder," he says.

Somebody on the platform—the ringmaster, or the main olive branch, or whatever they call 'em at peace meetings—says, "Sssh!" Just like that!

But the Great Pacifist, waving a commanding hand, leans over toward the Lad with the Wrist Watch, his face wreathed in the smile that won't come off in public.

"What is it you wish, my dear young friend?" he asks.

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“What I wish,” says the dear young friend, “is the words and music of this opera. I’ve been sitting here for an hour now, like a correspondence school cantatrice from South Bend listening to the Wagnerian cycle in the original tongue, and the occasional outcroppings of lucidity that reach my ears cause what little intelligence I may have to think it’s being insulted, and, as the man says, being insulted by experts. If I am wrong, I humbly apologize, and I would like to be set right.”

He fronts up before the platform, standing stiffly, heels together. Then it comes to me in a minute that he’s

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a soldier. At about the same moment I could see the same idea begin to coagulate in the place where the Great Pacifist thought he did his thinking. His smile slips a couple of notches.

“I shall be very glad to explain my views more fully to you at some other time and place,” he says.

“No time like the present,” says the Lad with the Wrist Watch. “Furthermore, I’m not at all stingy. I don’t want so much honor all to myself. I want all these other folks to share it with me.”

“But,” protests the Great Pacifist, “this is an address, not a debate.”

“Then,” says the Lad with the



“The force of his swing turns him around three times.”
[See page 52.]

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Wrist Watch, "we'll just change it. I've had all the address I need for one evening, and some left over to take back to the boys in the trenches."

In the meanwhile, as you can imagine, there began to arise a ripple of excitement. The Lad with the Wrist Watch was talking loudly enough for all to hear. So was the Great Pacifist. Also the dignified inmates on the rostrum.

At length a prosperous steel magnate, of Fifth Avenue and Pittsburg, who made peace in public and armor plate in private, ventured a suggestion.

"Put him out," he says.

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“You can’t,” says the Lad with the Wrist Watch.

“Why can’t we?” says the Steel Magnate.

“Because you’d have to use force,” says the Lad with the Wrist Watch. “And you don’t believe in force,” he says. “You’ve all said so.”

The Steel Magnate’s jaw drops.

“All you can do,” says the Lad with the Wrist Watch, “is to sit there and set me an example. But if I don’t choose to follow it, you can’t be blamed for that, now can you?”

“No,” says the Steel Magnate. “I mean yes.” Then, looking kind of batty, he goes into executive session with a well-known and justly-pop-

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ular carpet manufacturer from Brooklyn.

The Lad with the Wrist Watch had turned back to the Great Pacifist.

“So you don’t believe in fighting?” he says.

“Certainly not,” says the Great Pacifist.

“Then what have you been doing it for?” he demands.

The Great Pacifist grows pop-eyed. He doesn’t get it at all.

“Me? Fighting?” he gasps.

The Lad with the Wrist Watch nods.

“Certainly,” he says. “You’ve been fighting your head off all your life.”

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“And how, may I ask?” queries the G. P.

“You may,” says the Lad, “and I’ll tell you. When you were a minute old you started to fight measles and whooping cough and roseola. When you were five, you started fighting reading and writing and arithmetic. When you were twenty you started to fight the world for a living. When you were a little older, you fell in love with a woman, and you fought to get her. Then you went into business, and you fought your competitors; you had to, or they’d have put you out of business.

“You’ve been fighting alcohol and

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its manufacturers, and fighting them tooth and nail. And lately you've been fighting every right-thinking person in this country that's trying to take care of you in spite of yourself, and it's been dirty fighting, too, poisoned gases and boiling oil. And then you say you don't believe in fighting! Why, when it comes to fighting you've got Napoleon looking like my Aunt Eliza's pug dog!

"But that's all right enough," he goes on, "at least, for the most part. You've been fighting mainly just as all of us are fighting because life is fighting and fighting is life. The battle of existence is a fight, and a finish fight. It begins when we begin, and

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it ends when we end, and not before. Why, you poor nut," he says, not in just those words, but that's what he means, "if you only knew it, you're fighting here tonight. If you aren't just as much of a leader, in your poor misguided way, as the Kaiser himself, and if all these poor, sap-headed followers of yours aren't just as much of an army as are his soldiers, then I'll take my foot in my hand and go on home. And you're fighting for just as much harm—no, a whole lot more harm. All he's trying to do is to kill the people of other nations. You're trying to murder your own. And then you say you don't believe in fighting!"

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He eyed the Great Pacifist in greater disgust.

“If you only had a little more sense,” he says, “you’d be half-witted.”

The Celebrated Steel Magnate falls out of his chair and has to be assisted back by the Well-known Carpet Manufacturer.

But the Lad with the Wrist Watch is still going strong.

“So much for the fighting,” he says. “Now,” he goes on, “about carving our swords into plowshares and turning our torpedoes into teakettles, and setting such a shining example of peace that the whole world will emulate us. Do you believe that, too?”

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“I do,” says the Great Pacifist, his smile dropping another few degrees.

“All right, then,” says the Lad. “Now I’ve been sitting here all this time listening to your noble example. According to your idea, I ought to be exuding loving-kindness at every pore. But as a matter of fact, instead of that, I find myself getting scrappier by the minute. Whereat I should say that your second theory is about as good as your first.”

The place was now beginning to get a little lively. All the dignitaries on the platform have their heads together; but inasmuch as they can’t figure how they can throw the Lad out and still not throw him out, they’re

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stuck. Meanwhile, he keeps right on. "Having ascertained," he says, "that you don't believe in the use of force and all you are willing to oppose anybody with is a high moral example, I know now just what to do. But before starting in, I might add that this is without doubt the softest occasion I ever happened to run across."

"But what are you going to do?" asks the Great Pacifist.

"What am I going to do?" repeats the Lad. "I'm going to give you gentlemen a little lesson in peace. Nobody believes in peace any harder than I do. The fact that I've been through six years of war makes it even more than a belief; it's a religion.

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There's nothing so convincing as to the horror, the awfulness and the futility of war as having to wipe your best friend off your clothes, and seeing women and little children lying dead and mangled in the ruins of what was once a home.

"I've done the one, and seen the other; and a lot more things that are too horrible to talk about. And I tell you that war is the most terrible, gruesome, ghastly thing that hell ever created. to fill its gaping maw. There's only one thing worse. And that's the kind of peace that makes of men slaves and of women concubines. A nation with the blood lust knows no law of man or God. Give



“Breaking all records for altitude and sustained flight.”

[See page 53.]

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that nation its way, and it turns its back to civilization and its face to savagery.

“It takes law and order to make most people decent; law and order backed by force. What makes children go to school? Force. What makes men obey the law? Force. What keeps at bay murder, and rape, and all the rotten things that men can do? Force. Remove that restraining hand of force, and law and order are gone. Education is gone, and religion. Ideals are gone, and ethics. Gone are morality, and decency, and faith and hope and charity. And when they are gone, down goes the human race into the bottomless cess-

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pool of savagery and brutality. And that is what means this peace that you advocate here to-night.”

I tell you he was handing it to them hot off the griddle.

“Knowing war as I do,” he goes on, “naturally I am one of the greatest little peace fans the world has ever seen. But the first lesson in peace is that as long as there’s one murderous destroyer running around loose and looking for a fight, the rest of the world has got to accommodate him. If every human being on the earth believed as you do, that it is unjustifiable to use force under any consideration, and I were an unregenerate criminal with plenty of ammunition,

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I could have Rockefeller's money and your wife before morning. You wouldn't be here making long-winded arguments about things you are utterly ignorant of. I'd have you out in Great South Bay, stalking the ferocious clam. These two well-known-to-everybody-but-me citizens," indicating the Celebrated Steel Magnate and the Well-known Carpet Manufacturer, "I could either equip with rubber-tired pushcarts, or put into vaudeville as a sister act, or boil in oil, according to my whim of the moment. I could use the Capitol at Washington for a garage, and the Pennsylvania Station for a bowling alley. I could set fire to New York

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City and build it over right. I could make every man in the United States work for me for nothing, and I could have a harem that would make the Sultan of Turkey think he was a bachelor.

“And now just to show you that the casual sounds that have been emanating so mellifluously from your vocal orifice during the past hour are as meaningless, when brought into actual application, as an idiot’s dream, I will proceed to abolish your edifice of asininity, beginning with the top story and proceeding by degrees to the basement.”

He bowed politely to the Great Pacifist.

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“Wh—wh—what are you going to do now?” demands the latter, a bit wabbly.

“Only this,” says the Lad with the Wrist Watch. And, taking plenty of time, he slowly draws back his hand.

The Great Pacifist sees what’s coming. He ducks. But he ducks too late. Down comes the hand and lands full and flat against his cheek. Plick! It’s a good, fat wallop. It sounds like somebody dropping a watermelon on a cement sidewalk.

Following the sound, there falls over that surprised and amazed sea of upturned faces a hush that you could almost hear. It’s succeeded by,

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a murmur of consternation and other emotions.

But the Great Pacifist, while somewhat jolted, is still game. He raises his hand, commanding silence. Then as the murmur subsides, he spakes. No, he doesn't speak; he spakes.

"I fear him not," he says, pointing to the Lad with the Wrist Watch. "See, I turn the other cheek."

But he hasn't got it more than half turned before the Lad with the Wrist Watch lands on it like a pan of milk off a top shelf.

"Before proceeding further with the evening services," he announces to the foregathered Peace-at-any Pricers, while the G. P. is standing

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there trying to make out what hit him, "I will only say that there is nothing personal in this matter. What I am about to do, I do only for the sake of the American nation. And I might add," he says, "that my only regret is that I have but one pacifist to beat up for my country."

And, before the vast multitude has gained consciousness, he is after the Great Pacifist like a cooper going around a barrel. Yes, sir, he just naturally begins to treat him like a carpet on a line. He pokes him in the nose, and he hits him in the stomach, and he steps on his toes, and he jabs him in the ribs, and then

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he gets the G. P.'s head under his arm and spansks him a few times for luck. After which he props him up with one hand, and begins to pull his nose with the other.

The Great Pacifist bellows like a wounded gazelle.

"Peace at any Price, eh?" says the Lad with the Wrist Watch. "I've got the peace," he says, giving the G. P.'s nasal protuberance another yank, "but who's got the price?"

The G. P. makes a noise that sounds like an over-enthusiastic tea-kettle. With a pull that brings tears to his eyes, he wrenches his nose away long enough to ask assistance of a wall-eyed dignitary in a frock coat

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who's standing near by wondering if what he's seeing is really so.

"Oswald!" he yells. "Take him offa me! Quick!"

Oswald comes to. He takes one slow step forward; then six quick ones back. The Wrist Watch doesn't miss him by a thirty-second of an inch.

"The ruffian!" says the Celebrated Steel Magnate to the Well-known Carpet Manufacturer. "This will never do. Come! We will aid him."

Side by side, they advance. But not far. The Lad with the Wrist Watch places the palms of his hands against their fat and bewhiskered faces, and gives a good, hard push.

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Whereat the Celebrated Steel Magnate and the Well-known Carpet Manufacturer sit down on the floor.

Such is their momentum, however, that they not only sit down; they go further, and perform two of the neatest back somersaults I ever saw done by amateurs. Then they roll over on their right sides and, sticking out a pair of legs that would have done credit to a grand piano, they rise to their feet. It's all in unison, and one of the prettiest things I ever saw. If they had only had an orchestra to play the Tum, ti-ti-tum-tum, um, tum-tum that goes with it, you couldn't have told them from a couple of acrobatic dancers.



“The pitcher . . . hit the celebrated Steel Magnate in the place where he kept his indigestion.”

[See page 55.]

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In the meanwhile, the Lad with the Wrist Watch, regarding such feats as mere routine, has gone back to pulling the nose of the Great Pacifist.

Now there isn't a man in the world, no matter if he loves peace to the point of amorousness, that's going to be converted into a facsimile of a South American anteater without a protest. Muttering something that doesn't sound as though it came from the Bible, the Great Pacifist aims a wallop at the Lad's chin. The Lad ducks.

The G. P., with a great wrench, regains possession of his nasal organ, and now, thoroughly imbued with the

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spirit of the occasion, swings with all his strength at the Lad's jaw.

But just when, according to all the rules of peace, the G. P.'s fist should have connected with the Lad's lower maxillary, the Lad stoops. So much verve has the G. P. invested in his endeavor, that the force of his swing turns him around three times. That is, all of him turns except his legs. They form a neat spiral. And, as the spiral is not successful as a foundation for the human frame, the G. P. wavers for a moment, for another moment gives a short but creditable impersonation of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and then falls.

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Just what happens after that is somewhat vague in my recollection. I had been watching the middle ring so hard that I hadn't paid much attention to the rest of the show.

I remember that at about the third yank the entire audience rose to its, and other people's, feet. At the fifth, the Peace-at-any-Pricers were beginning to show signs of going to war.

Somebody went out on the street to call in the police that were on duty before the building. I think it was the gentlemanly usher; for I remember seeing him going out through the window, backwards, and without even hitting the sill. I don't know

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what his motive power was; but he seemed to be breaking all records for altitude and sustained flight.

But by the time the police arrived, the disciples of peace were beginning to take the chairs apart the better to impress their arguments on the heads of their enemies. And such were conditions that any man, policeman or other, had about as much chance of making his way through the gathering as a rich man has of going through a camel's eye.

I had no more chance to watch what was going on out front, because just at that moment things became somewhat hectic on the rostrum. The two Sheraton dignitaries that I'd

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come in with charged in a body. I was too late to duck. And besides, there wasn't room. They went over me like a steam roller.

When I got one eye open, the first thing I saw was Oswald. He was getting ready to soak the Lad with the Wrist Watch on the head with a pitcher. By reaching out, I managed to get a grip on each of his ankles. Just as the pitcher descended, I gave a yank.

The pitcher missed the head of the Lad with the Wrist Watch and hit the Celebrated Steel Magnate in the place where he kept his indigestion. He murmured, "Wumph!" and with a long-drawn sigh, leaned back like

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a tired dromedary against the Well-known Carpet Manufacturer.

The Well-known Carpet Manufacturer, who was interested mainly in keeping where the bullets were thinnest, stepped back. It was a step ill-advised. It took him over the edge of the platform. To save himself, he grabbed the Celebrated Steel Magnate by the coat tail. At which the celebrated Steel Magnate, to save *himself*, grabbed Oswald in a death grip; and as I was still fastened to Oswald's ankles, we all rolled off the rostrum together.

As we thus passed the Lad with the Wrist Watch, he turned his head to me long enough to say, calmly,

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“Thanks, old chap.” And as we descended airily to the floor, he turned his attention to about sixty Peace-at-any-Pricers who by this time had organized for a concerted assault.

Of what followed for a time, I remember even less. I must have hit my head on the way down. I remember lying for a while, thinking about this and that. I tried to recall who I was. But it was too much trouble. Then I thought: what difference does it make, anyway? Not being able to figure this out, I sort of gave it up and began to think about peace. What a wonderful thing it was! If only it weren't so terribly rough! There was a throbbing in my head.

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But it didn't seem to hurt. It was quite the strangest throbbing!

I came to. The throbbing was the watch of the Celebrated Steel Magnate. He was lying on my head, with his watch pocket driven into my left ear.

By much hard work, I got out from under him to find somebody else between me and the world. It was the Well-known Carpet Manufacturer. He, too, was comatose. Working my way further north, I found myself still fended off from existence by the prostrate form of Oswald. He was not unconscious. Things would have been much easier for the recording angel if he had been.

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I figured that in our sudden descent we must have entirely turned over, whereby the bottom was on top, like in your stomach. While thus cogitating, by bracing my feet against the Celebrated Steel Magnate and giving a good shove I managed to disinter myself from Oswald and came again into the light.

The battle was over. But, oh, how terrible had been the carnage! Broken chairs, broken heads, coat tails, handfuls of whiskers!

Before me, on the platform, the police reserves were unsnarling a pile of prominent peace advocates, trying to get the legs and arms that belonged

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to the proper trunks. It was like playing jack straws. Even as I looked, they removed the last layer. Underneath all was the Great Pacifist.

The Lad with the Wrist Watch was standing beside a sergeant of police who was talking to him.

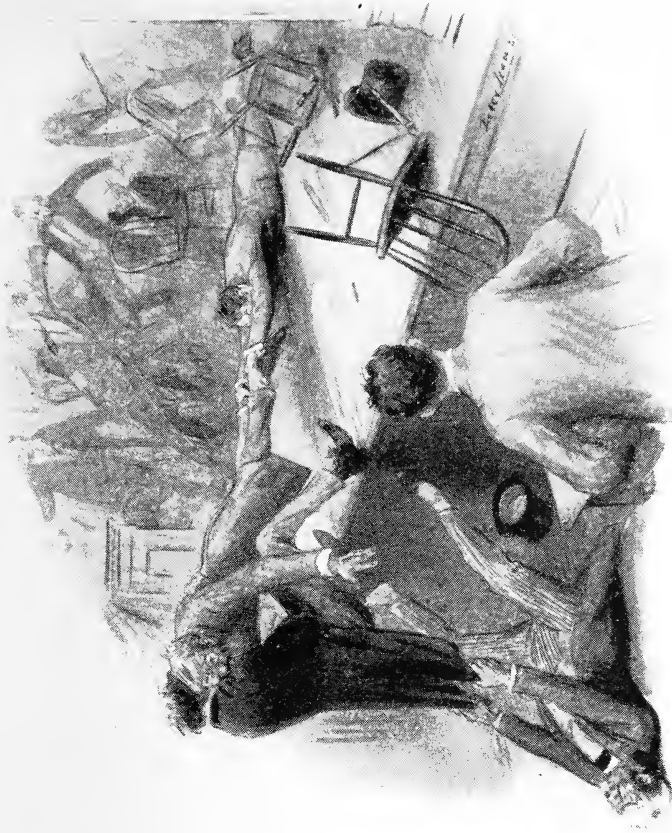
“Say, what’s the idea, anyhow?” he demanded.

“Idea?” says the Lad with the Wrist Watch. “That was the trouble. There wasn’t any.”

“But what was coming off here, anyhow?”

“A peace meeting,” says the Lad.

“Peace meeting!” says the sergeant, looking at the Great Pacifist



“The celebrated Steel Magnate, to save *himself*, grabbed Oswald in a death grip . . .” [See page 56.]

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who's sitting on the floor, trying to sort out his bumps and looking like the corner of Maple Avenue and Main Street, Liège. "If this is a peace meeting, me for the trenches where it's quiet."

"Arrest that man," says the two Chippendale gentlemen that I'd come in with, pointing at the Lad with the Wrist Watch. About two thousand others joined in the appeal, including Oswald. The Celebrated Steel Magnate and the Well-known Carpet Manufacturer couldn't join in because they hadn't got their wind back. But I could almost hear them wishing it.

The sergeant turned to the Lad.

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“Did you start all this?” he asks.

The Lad with the Wrist Watch nods.

“What for?” asks the sergeant.

“Just to show them that you couldn’t run a country without an army and navy any more than you can run a city without a police force.”

“Did they think that you could?” asks the sergeant.

“They did,” says the Lad with the Wrist Watch.

“The poor nuts!” says the sergeant.

“Also,” says the Lad with the Wrist Watch, “to show them the advantage of being prepared. I,” he says, “was prepared. Look at them.”

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Everybody was still yelling for the sergeant to arrest the Lad. That is, all the Peace-at-any-Pricers were; the others were yelling against it.

“But I don’t want to arrest you,” says the sergeant to the Lad.

“It’s all right,” says the Lad. “It’s your duty. Moreover, it’s all a part of what I want to show them.”

He turns to the sea of up-turned, and stepped-on, faces.

“Friends and fellow almost citizens,” he says, “in closing the evening’s entertainment, I have only to add that while peace is the most wonderful thing in the world, there is no peace except that of strength. An admission of weakness is an invita-

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tion of attack. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and civilization only as civilized as its most uncivilized member. A dove may set a high moral example to an eagle. But it isn't in the eagle's disposition to let that stop him from making the dove a meal for his family.

"Here," and he laid his hand on the shoulder of the sergeant beside him, "is your real dove of peace. He loves peace more than any of us. And when he finds anybody that doesn't, he fixes him so he will. The fact that if he had been here tonight to mingle among you, I wouldn't have been, proves, I think, my contention. He would have hit me on the head and

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the whole thing would have been over before it began.

“Here,” he says, again pointing to the sergeant of police, “as I say, is your real dove of peace. He makes peace possible because he makes its violation horrible. He may get killed doing it. But that’s a chance he takes when he’s born into the world. You can’t abolish war. It’s too bad that you can’t. It’s too bad, also, that you can’t abolish sickness, disease, cruelty, crime, lying, stealing, raping and murder. But you can’t abolish them because they’re all component parts of humanity; and to abolish them, you’d have to abolish humanity. The only thing you can do is to try to

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control them. If they get beyond control sometimes, try to put them back under control as quickly and completely as possible.

In closing, I have just one more thing to say. Before you talk any more of opposing a barbarian with a high moral example, get out your Bible and read about Christ. If you will recall, Christ was crucified. And if they would crucify Christ, where do you get off?"

He turns to the sergeant. "All right," he says. "I'm ready."

He stopped.

"But what about the police station?" I asked.

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“Oh,” my friend replied, “I just went along to bail the Lad out. I was too busy to go to court this morning. But he said he’d drop in here and let me know what happened.”

He looked out the window. “The long arm of coincidence,” he murmured.

A little later he of whom we talked was with us, tall, upstanding, dark of skin, gray of eye.

“It’s all right,” he said to my friend. “They didn’t press the charge. Perhaps they didn’t want any more publicity.”

“More!” said my friend. “Even the War Cry’s got it on the front page.”

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I was looking at our visitor meanwhile.

“Army?” I queried.

“West Point,” he answered. “Philippines, Boxer Campaign; and in Cuba. Late of the American Legion, Aviation Corps.”

“Oh,” I said.

“It was not that I wanted to interfere in what was none of my business. My wife was a Belgian. She was visiting her people in Namur, when the war broke out. . . . They wanted her to leave. . . . But she refused. Her father was prominent there. He stayed for the example. . . . She stayed for him.”

I nodded.

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“They said there was sniping. . . . They took him out and shot him, in the public square. She tried to save him. . . . They killed her, too. . . .

“She had sent the children to a convent, where she thought they’d be safe. . . . They got them with a bomb.”

There was a long, long pause.

“The littlest one was barely two,” he said. “She could walk a bit, if you let her take hold of your finger. . . . The others——”

His gray eyes grew dead. So for a long minute.

At length: “That’s why I couldn’t stand it last night.” He spoke very

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quietly. “It’s happened to me. . . .
I pray to God it may never happen
to others.”

And that, I think, is all.

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